



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## Riverside Honors “Keepers of the Inn,” Festival of Lights with Rose Parade® Float

*Duane and Kelly Roberts recognized for “Making a Difference” with Mission Inn Hotel & Spa*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Riverside’s 2018 Rose Parade® float honors Duane and Kelly Roberts, who revived the Mission Inn Hotel & Spa when it had been closed for seven years and then created a Riverside holiday tradition with the annual Festival of Lights, bringing millions of people to the city during the past quarter-century.

Riverside is honoring the Roberts family in keeping with the Rose Parade’s 2018 theme of “Making A Difference.” The float is the first from Riverside in nearly 60 years and symbolizes the strong bond between the city, the community and the historic and iconic hotel.

More than 500,000 people visit Riverside each year during The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa’s Festival of Lights, including 75,000 at the annual Switch-On Ceremony at the Mission Inn, which takes place the day after Thanksgiving. The hotel is illuminated with 5 million lights, followed by a spectacular fireworks display. Visitors enjoy a historic downtown that hums with activity, a serious departure from the days before the Mission Inn re-opened.

In the past decade, downtown Riverside has seen the addition of new restaurants, bars, coffeehouses, shops and more. Residents and visitors alike enjoy music, comedy and theater at the rejuvenated Fox Performing Arts Center, which now hosts acts like Jerry Seinfeld, Ramon Ayala and Graham Nash, and at the renovated Riverside Municipal Auditorium, both managed by Live Nation, the largest provider of live entertainment in the world. New loft housing in the downtown core is scheduled to open in the first half of 2018, with more on the way.

Riverside recently was chosen as the site for the California Air Resources Board’s new \$419 million headquarters and testing facility. The City of Riverside is working with the Riverside Art Museum to develop the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art, Culture and Industry, a world-class art museum and cultural center. Both it and a new state-of-the-art Main Library are scheduled to open in 2020.

“There is no doubt in my mind that, if Duane and Kelly Roberts had not re-opened the Mission Inn, and built it and the Festival of Lights to where they are today, we would not be seeing the same success we are enjoying as a community now,” Riverside Mayor Rusty Bailey said. “We are returning

to Pasadena to celebrate the 25th year of the Festival of Lights, and to thank Duane and Kelly Roberts for their hard work and immense generosity in creating and growing this annual festival.”

Many of those improvements either would not have happened or would still be on the drawing board had the Roberts’ not brought the Mission Inn back to life. The investment the Roberts made – and continue to make – in the Mission Inn has helped immeasurably in the revitalization of historic downtown Riverside. The Roberts family restored the hotel to its original grandeur and share a passion and commitment to ensure their beloved hotel will remain alive and well for generations to come.

Riders on the float will include Mayor Rusty Bailey’s family (Mayor Bailey and his wife, Judy Bailey, are walking next to the float) and representatives of charitable organizations that either were started by or embraced by the Roberts family. These include the Fox Foundation, which supports the Fox Theater; Mary S. Roberts Foundation, which is best known for its very effective pet adoption center; Olive Crest, which helps abused and neglected children; Mission Inn Foundation; and the Loma Linda Children’s Hospital Foundation.

Through the years, the Festival of Lights has been recognized as the *Best Holiday Lights Display* in the U.S., according to the readers of USA Today. The same readers named The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa’s Festival of Lights the *Best Holiday Festival* in the country. In honor of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Festival of Lights, “Keepers of the Inn” Duane and Kelly Roberts were thrilled to gift the community with a special guest performance by Kenny Loggins at this year’s Switch-On Ceremony.

“The theme for the 2018 Rose Parade is ‘Making A Difference,’ and Duane and Kelly Roberts have certainly made a difference in Riverside,” Mayor Pro Tem Jim Perry said.

No City of Riverside funds were spent on the float. The \$300,000+ needed to prepare the float and pay for assorted other expenses was raised by the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce Foundation.

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#### ***About the Pasadena Tournament of Roses®***

*The Tournament of Roses is a volunteer organization that hosts America’s New Year Celebration® with the Rose Parade® presented by Honda, the Rose Bowl Game® presented by Northwestern Mutual and a variety of accompanying events. 935 volunteer members of the association will drive the success of 129th Rose Parade themed “Making A Difference,” on Monday, January 1, 2018, followed by the College Football Playoff Semifinal at the 104th Rose Bowl Game. For more information, visit [www.tournamentofroses.com](http://www.tournamentofroses.com). Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.*